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Conn College students hear former CIA analyst

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NEW LONDON — Frank Snepp calls himself "the only American in history to be gagged by the Supreme Court for writing a book."

Snepp, a former CIA analyst whose 1977 book, "Decent Interval," described the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, told a group of college students Tuesday the intelligence agency "has tried to gag and impoverish" him because of the activities he exposed.

Speaking to about 190 students and faculty members at Connecticut College, Snepp said the CIA reacted sharply to "Decent Interval" because it caused extensive embarrassment to the agency.

"I hurt them by suggesting the CIA betrayed its own agents. That's punching them right in the solar plexus," Snepp said.

At the CIA's urging, the Supreme Court attempted to block publication of "Decent Interval," and ordered all profits from sales to be returned to the government.

After Tuesday's lecture, Snepp estimated he has lost \$150,000 in sales. Since resigning from the agency in 1975, Snepp has made his living on the lecture circuit, and is writing three new books and a screenplay.

Before those are published, Snepp said, he must have them cleared by the CIA in order to avoid them suf-

ferring the same fate as "Decent Interval."

During his lecture, Snepp recounted many of the tales included in the 590-page book, and repeated his contention the United States abandoned tens of thousands of South Vietnamese during the large-scale evacuation of Saigon in 1975. "Intelligence knew about the final drive a month before it started," Snepp said of the last North Vietnamese offensive.

He claimed that, as in the past, U.S. military leaders and the CIA's own top officials ignored intelligence reports.

Snepp, who was the agency's principal analyst on North Vietnamese affairs, served two tours at the U.S. Embassy in Saigon from 1969 to 1971, and from 1972 to 1975. During that period, he was in charge of the agency's informant network and was awarded the CIA Medal of Merit for his work.

During Tuesday's lecture, Snepp had the audience laughing at amusing anecdotes and observations, and then grimacing at some of the more grisly aspects of the war.

Among the intelligence reports, Snepp said, were details on Le Duc Tho's mistress, Ho Chi Minh's love of Salem cigarettes and the North Vietnamese army's predilection for Budweiser beer.

"We were always trying to get

hold of Salem cigarettes and ship him (Ho Chi Minh) a 'choice' pack," Snepp said.

The army's fondness for Budweiser was discovered when a U.S. supply room was raided and the beer taken. After that, Snepp said, there was a plan — never implemented — to drop cases of Budweiser along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in hopes of slowing down the enemy advance.

"This was strategic intelligence," Snepp quipped, drawing laughter from the audience.

But a moment later, the gathering listened in silent horror as he described the capture of a woman broadcasting pro-U.S. propaganda from a radio station.

The woman, he said, was tied to a tree, and her tongue was cut out. She drowned in her own blood, Snepp said.

Although he has been out of the agency for six years, Snepp has kept informed of its activities and said the agency in many ways is better now, but in others hasn't changed at all.

As for the agency's paramilitary force, Snepp said it has dwindled from 200 crack operatives during the Vietnam era to a paltry 80.

"Most of them are old men afraid to jump out of airplanes," he claimed.